Saint-Gobain

Summary

Saint-Gobain is one of the 100 largest industrial groups in the world with revenue of over €42 billion. It has 200,000 employees across 64 countries and working in four main fields: innovative materials, construction products, building distribution and packaging. They are all focused on the same strategy: the habitat of the future.

saint-gobain.com

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> ## The group's intranet portal has become a 'website factory' expertly handled by business users.
>
> Edouard Joppé, Portal & Collaboration Services Manager, Digital Solutions Team, Saint-Gobain DSI Groupe

Organization

Its industrial expertise and unique form of distribution proven over 350 years means that Saint-Gobain has huge innovation potential in terms of finding solutions to challenges in the areas of growth, energy sector, and environmental protection. The organization is divided along three lines: sectors, functions (Finance, R&D, HR, Marketing/ Communication, Legal/Fiscal and IT, which come under the holding company "La Compagnie Saint-Gobain"), and countries (13 general delegations). They coordinate around 50 activities carried out by 1,000 different companies/brands, including Lapeyre, Point.P, Isover, La Plateforme du Bâtiment and KparK in France.

Challenge

A quarter of Saint-Gobain's products did not exist five years ago. In fact, the Group's capacity for innovation saw it file close to 400 patents in 2013. To sustain this innovation – a key source of growth and competitiveness – the group had to have a quality Information System, including a group intranet. This information portal, which is accessed

Liferay
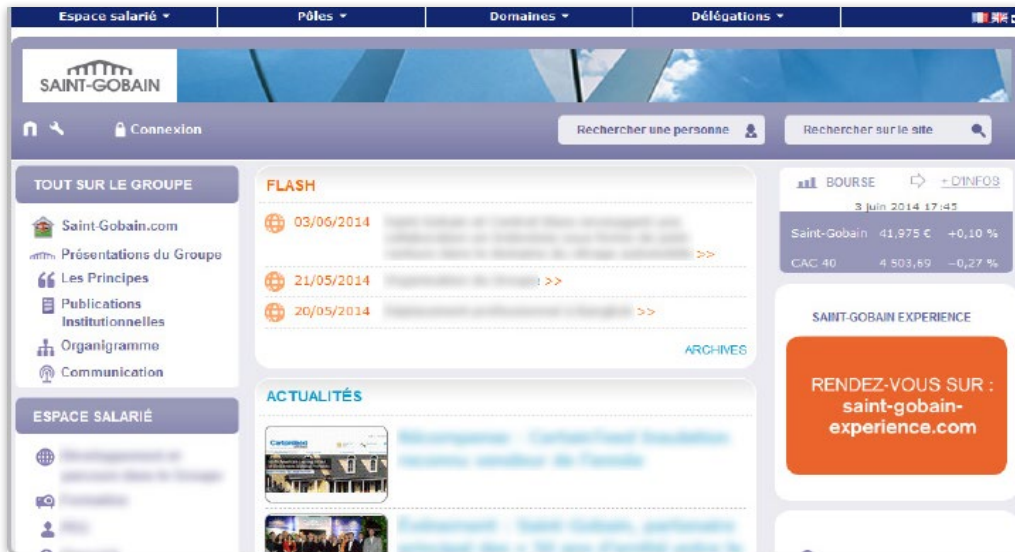
daily by more than 12,000 users, is becoming outdated and lacks flexibility. Users log on either anonymously or using their login details, but response times are slow, especially in Asia. Their solution maintenance expired in 2013, which made the Digital Solutions team consider different tools. "We wanted users to be able to manage content and create web pages themselves", explained Sarah Mocchi, Communication Tools Project Manager. Saint-Gobain also had specific deadlines and cost constraints to meet, as well as wanting to reduce the number of its servers.

Resolution

After considering the different options, Saint-Gobain chose Liferay because it was the only solution that fulfilled all of the group's criteria. There were several reasons behind their choice to migrate the existing portal to Liferay.

The first was user acceptance. They found the portal to be more open and user-friendly. In addition to technological considerations, the solution worked for the businesses. "Liferay reflected the mindset of our users", stated Edouard Joppé, Portal & Collaboration Services Manager. " They instantly became aware of the solution's many benefits,

and they quickly picked it up". The solution was also thought to be more robust and scalable, and its ability to integrate with third-party applications was another draw. Many users accessed documents (with the internal document management tool), collaborative platform communities, stock prices, etc. through applications (portlets).

Furthermore, other solutions were thought to be too "French". Half of the technical team working on the portal solution is based in India, so online resources and user forums contribute to increasing the expertise of the team in India. The flexibility and readiness of Open Source and Java technologies were also key factors in the decision-making process. Finally, the cost of the solution and implementation deadlines were also considered. Liferay definitely responded to all of Saint-Gobain's needs.

Business Value Added

The main added value for Saint-Gobain was the fact that users could contribute autonomously and that management of the different sites could be delegated to the different businesses. In less than an hour, the Digital Solutions team had created a website with the "Saint-Gobain" theme and had

trained users. The team doesn't insist on one particular model but does ensure consistency in the navigation. Users can then manage their websites in the way they see fit. They can create and manage their own pages and content, and instantly see their members using the "staging or remote staging" function. This function, which is active on all sites, is particularly useful to business users. "It means we don't have to stick to one model; we can be more flexible", said Edouard Joppé. "The group's intranet portal has become a website factory", he continued. Today, we have 255 websites, which are either public or restricted by access. Information governance is significant and the team will soon be able to more accurately calculate access statistics for the different pages.

The financial ROI is also impressive. Even taking into consideration the fact that the two portals existed in parallel for a while, maintenance costs were significantly reduced and the number of servers was cut in half. "The cost of migrating the existing solution to Liferay was offset in one year by the savings we made through subscriptions and reducing the number of servers", Edouard Joppé pointed out. "And we haven't encountered any technical or business headaches during migration.

Users have all been very enthusiastic because Liferay is so much simpler and more flexible than our previous solution, so user acceptance has been straightforward. In the beginning, our partner SQLI helped us with the project's framework and architecture, and implemented some specific developments. Now everything is handled by our teams in France and India. Nevertheless, the team is smaller than before because Liferay natively integrates several functions, such as the multilingual element, which for us is crucial".

Liferay has fully met all of the expectations of the Saint-Gobain Digital Solutions team. Portal traffic has doubled. 24,000 people now use it daily without any deterioration in service, and with faster response times in Asia for user logins. "Liferay has completely transformed the way we work. Decentralized terminal management has meant that the support team is free to concentrate on other value added tasks", concluded Mr Joppé.

In the future, Saint-Gobain plans to continue consolidating its different business intranet portals. Furthermore, the IT team is now looking into mobility and making the portal more easily internally accessible to mobile users on tablets and smartphones.